

# The PROBLEM OF LIFE

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**RAGHAVACHARI B. A.**

THE POPULAR HIGH SCHOOL,  
AHMEDABAD.

With an introduction by

**Prof. S. S. BHANDARKAR B. A. (London).**

Professor of English: THE GUJARAT COLLEGE,  
AHMEDABAD.

**September, 1934.**





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# The Problem of Life

*FOR YOUNG MEN*

By

ARASWATI RAGHAVACHARI, B. A.

Author of :

The Problem of Religion,  
Life of Dr. M. L. Sircar. Life of Sir C. V.  
Raman, The Teachings of the  
Ramayana & others.



With an introduction  
by

of. S. S. BHANDARKAR B. A. ( London ).

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AHMEDABAD.



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ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು - ೫೬೦೦೦೧,

DEDICATED

TO

**Dr. C. K. Patel** M. C. P. S., M. B. B. S.,

BOMBAY MEDICAL SERVICE.

As the author's humble tribute

Of

Appreciation for his great

Virtues as Man and skill

As Doctor.

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# FOREWORD

*By*

**Prof. S. S. Bhandarkar.**

**B. A (London)**

Mr. Saraswati Raghavachari, who has been introduced to me as a very earnest and devoted student of religion and culture, wishes me to write a short foreword to his new book 'The Problem of Life.' Mr. Raghavachari, in fact, hardly needs any introduction to the reading public; for, he is already known as the author of the 'Problem of Religion.'

The present book is in many ways a complement of that volume. It contains some sixteen essays which cover various aspects of life from health to truth. They are full of pregnant thoughts and are written in a terse and brisk style characteristic of the author.

The book is primarily meant for young men and sets forth in brief how the eternal problem of life is to be faced in a world which seems to be fighting shy of it.

One may or may not agree with all that the author has to say in this connection, but there is no doubt that his treatment of the subject is thought-provoking and in places throws an unexpected, if not original, light on the main problem under discussion. He often reminds one of the old proverb that the life of love is better than the love of life. Myself I have read through the book with much pleasure and recommend it to all those who are interested either in the problem of life or in the Art of living.

Ahmedabad,

19-9-34.

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## PREFACE

### *To the First Edition.*

It may seem somewhat presumptuous on the part of the author, who is himself young and inexperienced, to undertake to write a book, intended for the instruction and guidance of his friends and companions. This question is easily answered by a reference to the well-known assertion of Dr. Johnson that none but a dunce ever wrote except for money. Although this sounds rather extreme, it is an honest truth that the author was driven to this by dire necessity.

Again, no book can be said to *instruct* in the strict sense of the term. The highest value of even the best book is merely suggestive and not instructive. The best service that a book can render is to provoke thought and to turn the mind inward to study its own thoughts. It is for the reader to judge how far this volume has fulfilled this purpose.

Thirdly a book is often no less beneficial to the author than to the reader. Moreover reading a book is like holding communion with the author. It implies exchange of thought which is productive of mutual benefit.

This book, though apparently intended for the use of young men, will, the author hopes, not fail to interest the older generation,

firstly because the topics are of a highly general and cosmopolitan interest; and secondly, while the highest ideals of youth are discussed with directness and simplicity, the knotty problems of more practical interest have not been neglected.

This volume contains sixteen essays. Each can be read independent of the rest. Nevertheless, they have been arranged in a logical order and form a consistent system. Read together, they constitute an exposition, brief and imperfect indeed, of the basic principles of physical, intellectual and moral well-being. They throw some light, however faint, upon the science of life and attempt a description of the ideal of plain living and high thinking.

The treatment of some of the topics will be found to be disproportionately brief and imperfect. This has been due to want of space. However, the general aspects have been outlined and the most salient points touched. Any defects pointed out by the sympathetic reader will be rectified in due course.

The author is averse to long quotations. They have been freely indulged in, in this volume to give the reader a foretaste of the intellectual treasures that lie in store for him.

S. RAGHAVACHARI  
*1st April 1927.*



# THE PROBLEM OF LIFE FOR YOUNG MEN.

## I.

### HEALTH

Health is one of the greatest blessings of life. It is not only a blessing in itself but a condition precedent to every other blessing. A man may be rich, but if he is not healthy, his wealth will give him little happiness. Health without wealth is better than wealth without health. An unhealthy man is a source of anxiety to himself and to his kith and kin. He is a burden to himself and to the world. Ill-health not only deprives us of all the pleasures of life but is a constant source of physical pain and mental uneasiness. Health is physical equipment. Wealth is material equipment. Wisdom is intellectual equipment. Health is the basis for wealth and wisdom. This principle is enunciated in the couplet —

“Early to bed, and early to rise  
Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

Hence it is of the highest importance to know how to prevent ill-health; for “prevention is better than cure.” It is necessary not

only to know but to pursue the way to the attainment of health; for understanding is barren without practice. It is necessary to the healthy and unhealthy alike; for knowledge of the principles of hygiene will enable the healthy to prevent ill-health and the unhealthy to regain health.

Disease is caused by bad food, bad water, or bad air. Our food should be healthy, nutritious and clean. The clean food should be thoroughly masticated. There should be no hurry in taking food. Defective mastication causes indigestion.

The process of digestion begins in the mouth. Moderation is another important principle. Over-eating should be strictly avoided. Two light meals are better than one heavy meal. "Eat to live" should be our motto and not "Live to eat." We should never go to bed with a heavy stomach.

"After dinner sit awhile,  
After supper walk a mile."

Regular habits are an essential condition of health. Regularity in diet, sleep, and all the vital concerns of life is the most effective preventive of ill-health. Irregularity is due to mental weakness and its reaction on the body causes ill-health.

Once a man of ninety was questioned how he managed to live so long. His simple answer was that he ate when he was hungry and drank when he was thirsty. This may appear rather quite easy. A little reflection will show that it is not so ; for, most men usually eat when they are not hungry and do not eat when they are hungry.

Similarly, irregularity prevails in regard to drink also. Regularity in eating and drinking is the secret of longevity. Pure water is none the less important than pure food. Pure air is the most important of all. Impure air is the main cause of all lung-complaints.

Animal and vegetable kingdoms supplement each other as regards atmospheric requirements. Animals breathe out carbonic acid gas which serves as food for the vegetable kingdom, which by exhaling oxygen purifies the air for the animal kingdom. This is a principle of divine economy. Hence, it is most healthy for us to live in the midst of trees. We should not sleep in crowded rooms. We should live in well-ventilated houses. We should keep the windows open during the night ; so that the air inside may be kept always pure.

Regularity in sleep should be carefully observed. No arbitrary rules can be laid down as



regards the length of sleep. It varies according to the physical requirements of each individual "Three hours' sleep" says Napoleon "is enough for any man." He further adds that "one hour in the bath is worth four hours' sleep." It suited his hardy frame and vigorous mind. Six hours' sleep is generally recommended for men of average physique. The best thing seems to be to leave it to the good sense of each individual.

Perfect health is impossible without physical exercise. Without some physical work, we cannot properly digest our food. This rule does not apply to the day labourer, who has to earn a living by the sweat of his brow. It specially applies to members of the learned professions and to those who drudge at the desk and lead a sedentary life from morning to evening.

Cleanliness is another principle of hygiene. Daily bath is necessary for cleanliness; otherwise our body and clothing will emit a bad smell, as will be clearly seen when a day labourer approaches us. He works hard but he does not bathe daily nor does he wash his clothes properly. He is ignorant of the importance of cleanliness. Poverty is no cause for uncleanness. Even the poorest man may keep himself very clean by regularly bathing and washing his clothes. Ignorance is the cause of uncleanness. It is

due to the indifference of the educated classes, whose culpable aloofness and selfish negligence has led to the degeneracy of the masses.

The causes of sickness are not only physical but often mental. Fear is one of the most potent causes of disease. A clear conscience is the best safeguard against ill-health. A cheerful temper acts as a powerful restorative. Mirth conduces to health more than medicine. Worry and anxiety sometimes cause more sickness than bad food. That is why the farmer is much healthier than the merchant. Health can never keep company with restlessness. A regular, calm, and peaceful life is the surest guarantee of health and happiness.

Health is not only necessary for our happiness but it is our duty to preserve our health. It is as in to be unhealthy; for it implies an abuse of the gifts of God. We are born here for a definite purpose. Ill-health will render us unfit for it; thus the object of our very existence will be frustrated.

Health is not only a duty but it is true beauty. Physical deformity is a disease. Beauty that comes by birth fades away without health. Health is necessary to preserve beauty. Health without beauty is better than beauty without health. Health, if not beauty, is at least the best substitute for it.



## II.

### PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Man is endowed with a three-fold faculty--physical, mental, and moral. It is his duty to develop all the three; it is a sin to neglect any of them. The body is the foundation for the other two. A sound mind in a sound body is a universally accepted maxim. An unsound body is the cause of mental weakness and moral decay. Hence it is of the utmost importance to take particular care of our physical well-being.

Physical exercise is necessary for health. Without some physical work, we cannot properly digest our food. This rule does not apply to those who have to do physical work daily for their bread. They need no additional exercise for health. The admonition should not be forgotten by the educated classes who belong to the learned professions and those who drudge the whole day at the desk and are therefore accustomed to a sedentary life.

The importance of physical exercise is lost sight of in our educational institutions. Physical exercise is not enforced in our schools and colleges at all. Only nominal attention is paid to it. Passing the examinations is the only goal aimed



at both by the teacher and the pupil. Hence the products of the modern system of education are generally averse to physical exertion, with the mind but partially trained and the moral faculty totally neglected. It is therefore highly imperative that the educated people in India should become alive to the necessity of physical exercise, as a condition precedent, not only to physical well-being but to intellectual and moral improvement.

How does physical exercise make us healthy? By exercising the body, the blood is made to circulate more freely and rapidly. This helps to expel all the impurities of the blood by a free flow of perspiration through the pores of the skin. It is necessary for health that we should work with the body at least once every day, so that there may be a copious flow of perspiration. If we neglect this rule, bad matter accumulates in the blood and this is the beginning of ill-health.

An unhealthy man is a burden to himself and to the world. Ill-health deprives us of most of the enjoyments of life. It breeds not only physical pain but mental uneasiness and moral decay. An unhealthy man is a source of anxiety not only to himself but to all his near and dear connexions. Hence the importance

of physical exercise.


It is not enough that we are healthy. We may be healthy but yet weak: "To be weak is miserable, doing or suffering." Physical exercise is necessary for strength. It is only by exercise that our faculties can develop. It is only by exercise that our muscles can grow strong.

There is a wrong notion prevalent that taking nutritious food will make us strong. No food can strengthen us unless it is properly assimilated by the system. This is not possible without physical exercise. A strong man generally observes moderation in taking food. He seldom overeats. He is capable of self-control and is therefore not tempted by the pleasures of the table.

It is a defect of modern thought that indifference to physical culture is not treated with the same contempt and condemnation as mental and moral deficiency. We scorn folly, hate dishonesty, but overlook physical weakness. We know not that this is the cause of the other two. Physical exercise is therefore necessary not only for health, strength, and happiness but for mental and moral efficiency.

It is not necessary to compare the relative values of the different kinds of exercise, such

as swimming, running, walking and various outdoor games both Indian and European. But it is unnecessary to suggest that the less expensive the game the better for the majority. Men accustomed to high life indulge in the most costly games. The moral aspect of this question is outside the province of the present subject. Only one point needs a passing mention. The usefulness of a game as physical exercise is generally in inverse ratio to its costliness. Hence it is advisable to resort to less costly and more manly and useful exercise.





### III

## CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness is an essential condition of health. It is not very difficult to be clean. It is within the easy reach of all. Even the poorest man with but one cloth may be very clean. Nothing prevents him from bathing and washing his cloth daily.

Why then, are the majority so unclean? It is due to ignorance of the importance of cleanliness. It is due to habitual uncleanness. The day labourer is born in filth, bred up in noxious atmosphere, and inured to uncleanness. This is why he is not repelled by the repugnant smell emanating from his body and clothing and from that of his fellow-workman.

Cleanliness is now the ornament of culture. Time was when it was the common property of the whole mankind. It is the selfish exclusiveness of the cultured few that is responsible for the degradation of the toiling many.

Uncleanliness is one of the causes of disease. Bad matter always exudes through the skin in the form of perspiration, which is absorbed partly by our clothing and partly deposited on the body. If our body and clothing are not

thoroughly washed daily, the impurity gradually accumulates and not only emits bad smell but blocks up the pores of the skin and thus prevents the expulsion of blood impurities through the skin. Thus the blood gets impure and this is the commencement of sickness. Bathing is necessary not only to clean the body but also to cool the system.

Cleanliness is a duty that we owe to ourselves, because it is necessary for health, without which life is not worth living; for we shall become good for nothing. It is a duty that we owe to God because it is a sin to abuse the gifts of God, who has given us not only a clean body but has provided us with an abundant supply of the means whereby we can keep it pure and unsullied. It is a duty that we owe to our fellow-men, for we should try our best not to displease our neighbours. The approach of an unclean person is hateful to us, because it emits an unpleasant smell. Hence cleanliness involves a three-fold duty. Hence its utmost importance.

The body is the index of the mind. An unclean body indicates an impure mind. It may often happen that an impure mind lurks under a pure outward garb. But a pure mind seldom dwells in an impure body. An unclean body

breeds unclean thoughts. Physical purification is the first step to mental and moral purity. Hence bathing has acquired a religious significance.

Cleanliness enhances beauty and refines deformity. Beauty is a divine gift and comes by birth. No man is to blame for want of a fair complexion. But beauty loses half its attraction, if devoid of physical purity. Cleanliness without beauty is often preferred to beauty without cleanliness. It is good to have a fair face. It is better to have a pure body. It is best to have both.

Cleanliness should be distinguished from neatness. A house may be clean and yet not neat. A house is said to be clean, when it is free from dirt and other unwholesome material; but it is said to be neat when it satisfies the requirements of æsthetic sense. Cleanliness is a principle of hygiene but neatness is one of æsthetics. The question of cleanliness does not admit of difference of opinion; but that of neatness is determined by a variety of taste. It is a sin to be unclean; but want of neatness is an outrage on the æsthetic sense. Cleanliness is based on a sense of purity; but neatness is guided by a sense of beauty. Neatness often comprehends cleanliness; but cleanliness does



not necessarily include neatness. Cleanliness is entirely physical; but the source of neatness lies deeper in the intellect. Cleanliness is guided by the sense of smell and touch; where as neatness is determined by the eye. But perfect cleanliness borders on neatness and perfect neatness is not different from cleanliness. Cleanliness is deficient without neatness and there can be no neatness without cleanliness.

## IV

### EDUCATION

Education has been one of the most powerful agents of human progress. The progress of a nation in civilization has ever been in proportion to her advancement in education. Germany was the first country that inaugurated a system of compulsory education. She therefore led the thought of the world in the last century. The banishment of illiteracy is the first condition of national greatness. Hence the importance of education, in the work of national reconstruction.

Education literally means the drawing out of our faculties. (Ex-out, Duco-to lead). The object of education is the development of our latent powers. God has given us three kinds of power:—physical, mental, and moral. A perfect system of education does full justice to all the three. It is our duty to improve the gifts of God. It is a sin to neglect any of them. Hence the object of education is threefold. It enables us “to get on, get honour, and get honest.” Physical culture makes us healthy and strong. Intellectual culture makes us learned and refined. Moral culture makes us good and

honest. Physical education helps us to live aright. Intellectual education to see aright, Moral education to act aright.

Judged from this point of view, the educational system in India is very defective. Physical culture is totally neglected, the moral rarely thought of, and even the intellectual but partially touched. Hence it is productive of more harm than good. The educated Indian is generally a physical wreck, a moral insolvent, with his mind stuffed with ill-digested matter. The aim of education now-a-days seems to be to earn a living. It is contemptuously called bread and butter education. The object of education in India is to manufacture "hewers of wood and drawers of water," Perfection of human nature should be the true end of education.

Education is not instruction. Instruction is only one of the means of education. Book-learning is not the sole aim of education. "Crafty men condemn studies; simple men admire them; and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them and above them and won by observation." These remarks of Bacon should warn the student against attaching too much importance to studies.

The importance of education is illustrated by the following passionate appeal of a great



American Orator to his countrymen:—"Educate your children; educate all your children; educate one and all of them."

Bacon in his excellent essay on "Custom and Education" says, "Men's thoughts are much according to their inclination; their discourse and speeches according to their learning and infused opinions; but their deeds are after as they have been accustomed. If the force of custom, simple and separate, be great, the force of custom, copulate, conjoined, and collegiate, is far greater. For there, example teacheth, company comforteth, emulation quickeneth, and glory raiseth." The creation of such copulate and collegiate custom is one of the primary ends of education, irrespective of clime or country.

Education is of three kinds:—elementary, secondary, and university education. Elementary education should be free and compulsary. Its aim is to train good workmen. The production of good citizens is the aim of secondary education. The object of higher education is the production of original thinkers and leaders. The average product of Indian Universities is a sorry mediocrity. Want of originality is the common feature of our graduates.

Education is not an end in itself. It should never be sought for its own sake. It is a means

to a higher and nobler end, *viz*, the perfection of our manliness and womanliness. The highest aim of education is the realisation of our individual and national destiny.

“Man is a God in ruins.” The ideal of education is to develop the divine in man. A system of education not founded on such an ideal is not only narrow in its outlook, but demoralising in its tendency and pernicious in its results.

The recipients of higher education should not forget that their educational course should not cease with the University career. True education teaches us that we should be students throughout our lives, ever aspiring and ever achieving. Knowledge should be our constant endeavour. We, should never give up the search after Truth.

Educaton, while it confers upon us certain advantages, also widens the sphere of our duties and responsibilities. The educated should not neglect the duties that they owe to their country and especially to their less fortunate brethren. Standing, as they do, on the vantage ground of Truth, they should not scorn their ignorant country-men, but continually strive to enlighten them and elevate their condition. They should try to become centres of wholesome and beneficent influence, a credit to their University and a glory to their country.

## V

### SELF-HELP

“ How happy is he born and taught,  
That serveth not another's will ;  
Whose armour is his honest thought  
And simple truth his utmost skill ! ”

“ Whose passions not his masters are,  
Whose soul is still prepared for death,  
Untied unto the world by care  
Of public fame or private breath ! ”

SIR HARRY WOTTON.

“ Heaven helps those who help themselves ” is a maxim which enjoys the unique glory of universal acceptance. It is quite in line with popular thought. Like most of the proverbs, it represents the wit of one and the wisdom of many. Like all popular wisdom, it does not go far beneath the surface of things. It does not evince much depth of insight.

The idea of help is based on a popular misconception. It is the offspring of ignorance and the parent of arrogance. The rich man who parts with a small portion of his superfluity for feeding the poor prides himself on having done much



help to them. He does not know that he helps himself more than the recipients of his charity. It is ignorance of his duty that breeds a spirit of arrogance.

He does not realise that it is a sin to be rich; for, "it is easier for a camel to enter the needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." The only proper atonement for riches is to use it for the relief of distress. This is no cause for exultation or pride. Alms benefit the giver more than the recipient. It is an out-flow of love and sympathy. Every act of love ennoble the heart and exalts the lover. A loving heart is the abode of God. The Christian injunction that he that hath two garments shall give one to him that hath none, not only means that the rich should help the poor but also lays down that no man has a right to possess more than he needs. Hence every opportunity to relieve distress should be welcomed as a God-send. This ought to be the attitude of the wealthy few.

But the poor in distress should strive hard to get on without the munificence of the rich. This does not seem quite easy under the present conditions. Hence the great admiration in which the spirit of self-reliance is universally held. The self-reliant man is made of the stuff

of heroes and martyrs. Let us analyse and examine the composition of this stuff.

Generally the term "self-help" is understood in a restricted sense. Its application is not extended beyond the narrow sphere of bread and butter. A list of the so-called self-made men is held up for our guidance and inspiration. Indeed, the biographies of self-made men are full of inspiring lessons, illustrative of honesty, confidence, courage, perseverance, and fortitude. But they do not carry us far beyond the bread and butter problem. They all illustrate how we can, by our own unaided efforts, plod through poverty to wealth, and through adversity to prosperity.

We do not want to disparage their importance to the common folk. Their great defect is the modicrity of the ideal they illustrate. We admire a strong mind, his strength of resolution, singleness of purpose, love of truthfulness and honesty, untiring industry and perseverance, and confidence and courage under most distressing circumstances. All these are admirable qualities. But to what end? The goal is, after all, a decent competency or wealth or rank, or power; in a word, it is material. We do not in the least minimise the importance of material prosperity. It is im-

possible to over-rate it under the existing conditions. Nevertheless we should not lose sight of our ultimate goal. If we look at the question from the true standpoint, our appreciation of the true spirit of self-help will be deepened, our admiration will be heightened; for, we shall then be in a position to separate the wheat from the chaff and to realise how little true wheat there is in the world. The material represents the lowest plane of human life. Physical slavery is not slavery of the worst type. Intellectual slavery is worse still and moral slavery worst of all. The truly self-reliant man is he who has broken asunder all kinds of fetters, and whose soul is perfectly free.

Self-respect is the foundation for self-help, self-respect which would reject with scorn not only material gifts but intellectual and spiritual as well. Sir Walter Scott was honest to the core of his nature. When his publisher and printer broken down, ruin seemed to stare him in the face. Friends came forward who offered to raise money enough to enable him to arrange with his creditors. 'No' said he proudly, "this right hand shall work it all off." "If we lose everything else," he wrote to a friend, "we will at least keep our honour unblemished." Here is a mixture of high self-respect with firm determination



and dauntless courage. But neither the life nor the writings of Scott evince much of that higher order of self-reliance which alone can bring intellectual and moral freedom.

True self-respect teaches us to value our individuality above all earthly possessions. It is based on the realisation of the dignity of the human soul. God has made me distinct and different from all other men. I have my own place to fill in the world, humble or high. I am here to accomplish a mission. Else my life is an illusion. What I have to do, I alone can do, and none other. True self-respect teaches me that "envy is ignorance; and that imitation is suicide." True self-respect is strengthened by the still small voice within:—"Trust thy self: every heart vibrates to that iron string." True self-respect teaches me to respect my own conscience, my own conviction and my own reason. It does not prevent me from seeing and admiring greatness in others. But it reminds me that what I admire in others is my own ideal. I am a soul with immense possibilities. It will be suicidal on my part to set a limit to their unfoldment by envying one or imitating the other. To me my individuality is worth more than all the worlds. Such self-respect is infused by the highest conception of

the dignity of man, his divine origin and his ultimate destiny.

Here is an important lesson for the guidance of the teacher and the pupil. The teacher is generally not a help but a hindrance. The teacher should not forget that his tuition should help the pupil's intuition. He should impress upon the pupils that they should not accept as gospel truth everything they are taught, but that they should be guided by their own convictions. Instruction is baneful if it is not thought-provoking. The work of the teacher should be suggestive rather than instructive. Thus alone can be laid the foundation for originality of thought and independence of judgment. "Our reading" says Emerson "is mendicant and sycophantic." Knowledge should grow from within and should not be imported from without. Self-knowledge is the beginning and the end of all true knowledge.

We are born and brought up in the midst of countless prejudices, traditions, and customs. Our life is hedged round, as it were, by insurmountable barriers. Our hearts are choked almost to death by the wild growth of thorns and thistles, which curb the free flow of our emotions and the unrestricted exercise of our reason. Our life looks like a ready-cooked dish

which we have to swallow without demur. This is what the majority do. There is no need for thought ; much less need for independence of judgment. We are asked not to *live* but only to copy. Where is there any scope for self-reliance ? The so-called self-reliant who unceasingly preach the doctrine of self-help to the toiling millions and debase it by limiting its application to the domain of material life succumb helplessly to the tyranny of public opinion, popular tradition, established custom, and the fashion of the day. This is intellectual and moral slavery. This is more debasing than the acceptance of material gifts. True greatness consists in defying public opinion and asserting the individual conscience. This requires moral courage of the highest description. It is moral courage that can change the history of the world. Society is always governed by the Past. It cannot outgrow itself, just as water can never rise above its source. The triumph of individual conscience against the torrent of public opinion is the only road to social progress. The spirit of accomodation is detrimental to that of self-assertion. The individual conscience of to-day will become the social conscience of to-morrow. Martyrdom is often the crowning glory of self-assertion.



The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the most glorious example known to history. His last words were an appeal to God in behalf of his enemies :—

“ Father, forgive them ;

They know not what they do.”

Socrates was condemned to drink the hemlock. He died discoursing on the immortality of the soul. His last words to his judges were, “ It is now time that we depart—I to die, you to live ; but which has the better destiny is unknown to all except to God.”

Bruno was burnt alive at Rome, for exposing the false philosophy of his time. When the judges pronounced his sentence, he proudly said, “ You are more afraid to pronounce my sentence than I am to receive it.”

Not less courageous was the behaviour of Sir Thomas More. The Duke of Norfolk said to him, “ By the Mass, Master More, it is perilous striving with with princes ; the anger of a prince brings death ! ” “ Is that all, my friend, ” said More, “ then the difference between you and me is this—that I shall die to-day and you to-morrow.”

Martin Luther, the father of Reformation, was told by his friends that he would lose his life if he appeared at Worms. “ No, ” said

he, "I will repair thither though I should find there thrice as many devils as there are tiles upon the house-tops." Conformity is a great impediment to the outflowing of the individual soul. A great soul is a great non-conformist. "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." Conformity and consistency are the enemies of conscience.

What I must do is all that concerns me and not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion ; it is easy in solitude to live after our own ; but the great man is he who, in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

The doctrine of self-reliance applies no less to the spiritual than to the intellectual and material domain. I love truth not because I fear public condemnation or divine retribution but because it is the law of my being. I do right and avoid wrong because it conduces to my growth and well-being. I do not *fear* God, for fear makes me a slave. I worship God because I love him. Fear of God is a relic of ancient barbarism. I love God not because

I want his favour, but because he is the embodiment of my highest ideal. I obey God, because in obeying him I obey my own higher self. I meditate on God, because I am one with Him. Love of God is identical with love of good. Love of good is the law of our being and our growth. Self-love is the highest form of love. Self-approbation is the greatest approbation. Self-condemnation is the worst condemnation. Love of men and love of God are the outgrowth of self-love. The approval of individual conscience is the condition precedent to the approbation of society and of God. The punishment of sin is internal and immediate rather than external and remote. This is more harmful and dangerous than social condemnation or divine retribution. This is the lesson suggested by the precepts. "Know thyself," "Trust thyself," and "Obey thyself." This is the spiritual significance of the doctrine of Self-reliance. "Welcome evermore to gods and men is the self-helping man. For him all doors are flung wide ; him all tongues greet, all honours crown, all eyes follow with desire. "

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## VI. DUTY.

“ I slept and dreamt that life was Beauty ;  
I woke and found that life was Duty ”

The word Duty conveys the idea of an external imposition. It is derived from the word *due* and means a debt, so that “Duty is a thing that is due and must be paid by every man who would prevent discredit and eventual moral insolvency. ” It corresponds to the Sanskrit word *Dharma*, but only partially conveys its connotation. Dharma is not external. It is the law of our being. It is the principle of soul life and manifests itself in *karma* ( outward action ). It is not influenced by fear of discredit or insolvency but by the struggle of the soul for self-expression, self-assertion and self-realisation. It is not guided by public sentiment or public approval but by the principles of inner life and the approbation of the inner self. Nevertheless we have no better word than Duty to connote the idea of Dharma. But we are glad to note that it has now acquired a deeper and wider significance than it literally connotes.

The first principle that should be grasped in connection with Duty is that the man who fails to do his duty suffers more by his neglect than those to whom the action is due. Hence it is not for the sake of others but for our own sake that we have to do our duty. "Man is his own star." He rises or falls by his own character and conduct. The performance of duty is enjoined not by any commandment from without but by the necessity of the law of our own being and becoming. It is in obedience to the commandment of the inner self. It is in accordance with the dictates of higher reason. Sri Rama spurned the glittering prospect of a throne and sought the hardship of a forest life, not to please his father Dasaradha, because Dasaradha wished otherwise and died broken-hearted in consequence of separation from his darling son, nor to please his brother Bharata who refused to go back to Ayodhya without Rama, nor to satisfy any other outside agency or authority, but in obedience to the commands of his inner Self whose essential principles were Truth and Dharma. "England expects every man to his duty" was the exhortation of Nelson. His flag at Trafalgar flew with the signal—

“Not glory, or Victory, or Honour, or Country, but Duty!” “The great Washington did not do his duty for effect. Nor did he think of glory or of fame and its rewards; but of the right thing to be done and the best way of doing it.”

Man stands at the centre of an ever-widening series of concentric circles of duties. which beginning with the home and family, gradually extend through the community and country until at last they comprehend the whole humanity. “Duty rounds the whole of life, from our entrance into it until our exit from it—duty to superiors, duty to inferiors, and duty to equals—duty to man and duty to God.” First we owe certain duties to ourselves, duties relating to health and strength, cleanliness and purity, self-respect and self-reliance. Then there are duties to our parents—filial love, devotion, and obedience; then to teachers and fellow-students; then to our wives and children; then our community, country, and humanity. The various duties are too well-known to need mention. But the spirit of duty rests on a high ideal of life, which scorns sensual indulgence and is bent upon the realisation of our ultimate destiny. To set our heart on a noble ideal, to pursue it with un-



swerving devotion, to be undaunted by difficulties and disappointments, to be unmoved by popular disapprobation, to maintain courage and confidence under the most distressing circumstances, to pursue the goal with a daring heart and dauntless spirit—these are the essential conditions of the true spirit of duty and of individual and national greatness. We must so serve ourselves as to further the interest of our family; so serve the family as to advance the common interest of the community; so serve the community as not to conflict with the welfare of the country; so serve the country as to contribute to the well-being of the whole humanity. Universal love is the road to selfrealisation, which is union with the Universal Self.

The spirit of duty is often eclipsed in this country by the demon of sacrifice. The idea of sacrifice is a relic of ancient barbarism. Most religions have done with sacrifices and yet the idea of sacrifice still clings to us with a bulldog tenacity. Sacrifice is base and mean. It is a false notion. Self-sacrifice is a misnomer. It is a contradiction in terms. The self can never be sacrificed. It is eternal and free. It is neither possible nor desirable to sacrifice the self. When a man dies for his country, he

makes no sacrifice. It is not sacrifice but the triumph of the self. We give up the lower for the higher ends. We reject the mean and seek the noble. Every case of martyrdom illustrates the triumph of a noble idea. Very often in this country the false idea of sacrifice affords a plea for many a moral delinquent for failure to discharge his duty. It is the duty of every citizen to serve his country. One who does not do it is guilty of neglecting his duty. There is no self-sacrifice in doing one's duty. It is a sin to sacrifice oneself; but it is glorious to die for one's country. It is a duty to work for one's country and to fight in her defence. One who does not do it fails in his duty. But in this country the idea of sacrifice has taken the place of duty and affords a false refuge for many an offender against public condemnation. Hence it is necessary to realise the importance of duty and the penalty that its neglect inevitably entails.

"It is a grand thing, after all, this persuading spirit of duty in a nation; and so long as it survives, no one need despair of its future. But when it has departed, or become deadened, and been supplanted by thirst for pleasure, or selfish aggrandisement or glory—then woe to that nation, for its dissolution is near at hand."

## VII.

### TRUTHFULNESS.

God is Truth and Truth is God. Hence lying is a sin. Truthfulness is a duty we owe to God; for God is an embodiment of Truth and is always on the side of Truth. Falsehood is opposed to the will of God, for He made man a lover of Truth.

Truth is a duty we owe to ourselves. Truth is natural and falsehood unnatural. Truthfulness is the law of our life and falsehood is opposed to our growth. Truthfulness is self-expression; falsehood self-suppression. The self expands and grows strong by true outward manifestation; it shrinks and grows feeble every time it is suppressed. This is the difference between a freeman and a slave. Freedom facilitates growth. Slavery suppresses it. Truthfulness is the free outflow of a free mind; whereas falsehood is its obstruction. Hence true growth, true advancement, and true success in life is impossible without truthfulness.

Moreover, falsehood does not wait to be punished by the public or by God. The most



infallible tribunal is within the heart of every man. Every lie stands self-condemned before it meets with public condemnation. The liar falls in his own estimation before he loses public esteem. The severest punishment of sin comes from within the inmost depths of our heart. The most dangerous verdict to be feared emanates from the pronouncements of the inner machinery of justice. Conscience is our highest tribunal. Remorse is our severest penalty. Indifference to the voice of conscience leads to self-degradation. Truthfulness is therefore indispensable to self-expression, self-assertion, self-improvement, and self-realisation.

“It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore and to see ships tossed upon the sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle and to see the battle and the adventures thereof below; but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth and to see the errors and wanderings and mists and tempests in the vale below.”

Man is a social being; and Truth is the foundation of social life. If all men were liars, the world would come to an end. Social order is based on Truthfulness. Falsehood tends to the disintegration of Society. There can be no social

intercourse without truthfulness. "Truth is the very bond of society, without which it must cease to exist and dissolve into anarchy and chaos. A household cannot be governed by lying nor can a nation. Sir Thomas Browne once asked, 'Do the devils lie?' 'No,' was the answer, "for then even Hell could not subsist." Hence Truthfulness is a duty we owe to society.

Success in life is impossible without truthfulness. "Honesty is the best policy." Falsehood may lead to temporary or false success. False success is like a tree rotten at the core. It cannot stand the hour of trial. When the wind comes with a furious blast, the tree is shaken to the foundation and tumbles down root and branch. No permanent success can rest on a lie. It is swept like a house built on sand. Truth is strong with the whole strength of nature. Falsehood is an uphill work. Truth cannot but triumph in the end. It is the foundation of true greatness. It is the necessary condition of true success.

Lying is the basest of vices. It is mean to tell a lie because it is the offspring of cowardice. It proceeds from fear of punishment.

"He that does one fault at first  
And lies to hide it makes it two."

Ignorant mothers often teach their children to lie. Many persons order their servants to lie for them. "They know not what they do." All this proceeds from thoughtlessness and ignorance of the importance of Truthfulness. Lying is opposed to the growth of manliness and womanliness. Cowardice undermines character. The declaration that "Conscience doth make cowards of us all" is the product of a diseased imagination. It is not conscience that makes cowards of us but conscious guilt and fear. Conscience makes heroes of us. Conscience provokes courage; and fear induces cowardice. Truthfulness distinguishes moral courage. Lying is a symptom of slavery.

Lying is of different shades and different grades. Very few fully realise the extent to which modern life is pervaded by falsehood. The whole society rises up in arms against the formal liar, who after all, may be much more honest than the majority of his accusers and whose lie may be after all of a trivial nature. False speech is the only form of falsehood generally recognised and disapproved. Its other forms, no less pernicious, are generally connived at. Diplomacy is a political lie. Expediency is a business lie. Silence, when speaking



the truth is a duty, is an implied lie. False promise is a lie in anticipation. False appearance is a common lie ; for, where is the man who would appear exactly as he is ? Flattery is a lie to please. Flattery pleases false pretence. The worst of it is that it pleases men even when it is known to be flattery. It needs extraordinary love of truth to rise in revolt against flattery. Exaggeration is another form of lying. Thus the Demon of the False seems to pervade the lives of men, so that Satan seems to reign supreme. "Poets lie for pleasure, merchants for profit but some lie for the mere love of it."

Belief is natural and distrust is unnatural. Suspicion is a disease of the human mind. Suspicion provokes dishonesty ; belief begets truthfulness. The example and teaching of Dr. Arnold instilled in his pupils a scrupulous regard for truthfulness. He used to say to his pupils, "If you say so, that is quite enough ; *of course* I believe your word." The boys at length began to feel and say to each other, "It is a shame to tell Arnold a lie—he always believes one."

A celebrated aurist once treated Wellington for deafness. He applied a strong solu-

tion of caustic which almost endangered his life. The catastrophe was averted by the family physician. The aurist next day hurried to the Duke to express his grief and mortification. The Duke said, "Do not say a word more about it—you did all for the best." The aurist said that he would be ruined if the matter became public. The Duke added, "But nobody need know anything about it. Keep your own counsel and depend upon it, I won't say a word to any one." "Then your Grace will allow me to attend you as usual, which will show the public that you have not withdrawn your confidence from me?" "No" replied the Duke kindly but resolutely, "I can't do that, for that would be a lie."

This essay cannot be better concluded than with a quotation from Bacon: "It is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of Truth."

## VIII

### LOVE

“ All thoughts, all passions, all delights,  
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,  
All are but ministers of love,  
And feed his sacred flame.”

COLERIDGE.

Love is the essence of Life. It makes life possible, pleasurable, pure and perfect. It is the moving force of the world. It is the main spring of human activity. It pervades life in different colours and different garbs. It is the parent of “all thoughts, all passions and all delights.” Though essentially the same, its manifestations are manifold. It imposes different duties under different circumstances. The father, who loves his son, likes him when he does his duty, admires when he does a noble deed, rebukes when he is idle, admonishes when he is thoughtless, resents his wanton mischiefs, and punishes a heinous offence. In all these cases, paternal love has taken different forms under different circumstances.



There is no such thing as hate in the world. Hate is the negation of love, just as darkness is the absence of light. Light is positive ; darkness negative. Love is positive ; hate negative. Hate is but the absence of love. Love is the substance ; hate is the shadow. Hate implies not a presence but an absence. It means the nonexistence of love. It is also the offspring of love. We hate every one and everything that hinders the progress of our love. Hate springs from disappointed love. Thus love underlies both good and evil.

“Charity begins at home.” *Charity* here means *love*. Home is the birth-place of love. Mother is the first object of our affection. Father stands next ; Filial affection is the first form of love ; Fraternal is the next ; love of relations and friends, the third ; conjugal the fourth ; maternal and paternal affection the fifth ; patriotism or love of country comes next ; philanthropy or love of mankind, last. Love starts from the self and gradually expands to the full circle of the universe. The self is the true source of love. Love in all its manifold forms is but the outgrowth of self-love. Consciously or unconsciously the self reigns supreme. I love my father, because he

is *my* father. I love my friend, because he is *mine*. I love my country, because it is *mine*. I love man, because I am a man. Thus even universal love is but the highest generalisation of self-love. But what is this self? The individual self is but a reflection of the Universal. It is but a ray of the Universal Lord. A knowledge of this secret at once clears the mystery. The gradual expansion of love is but the gradual unfoldment of the divine in man. Man attains perfection when he loves the whole universe.

God is the embodiment of love. Truth, love and beauty are essentially the same. They are the essential attributes of Divinity. God is the only truth. Love of God is true love. Divine beauty is true beauty. We naturally love the beautiful. God is the embodiment of all beauty. The Universe is but a manifestation of God. Hence true love is love of Truth, love of beauty, love of God, love of man and love of the Universe. All else is false love. Love of God is a perennial spring of supreme bliss. There is no room for hatred there. Every created object is a manifestation of divine beauty. The universe looks beautiful and inspires love.

Unfortunately this is not the sense in which the expression *true love* is generally used and understood. It is often used in a restricted sense to mean conjugal affection. The term love has degenerated in meaning and usage. It has become the sport of novelists and dramatists. It has thus created the false view of "The tragedy of True Love." It has inspired the Shakesperean view that "the course of true love never did run smooth." It underlies the Baconian Philosophy that, "Great spirit and great business do keep out this weak passion (love). It is impossible to love and be wise." He that preferred Helena quitted the gifts of Juno and Pallas (Riches and wisdom"). Conjugal love does not deserve the name of true love. It is inspired by physical and intellectual accomplishments. It rests on a frail foundation. It has given rise to the problem "how to be happy though married." It is often said that we should marry those that we love. This expresses but a half-truth. The other half is that we should love those that we marry. The whole truth solves the problem. "True love" or "Love at first sight" in the sense of nuptial love is a misnomer and is a creation of the imagination of poets and novelists. Romeo had



loved another lady till he saw the more beautiful Juliet. His first love proved false. The second too would have shared the fate of the first, if Romeo had met Juliet's superior. Such is the course of the so-called true love. It therefore never runs smooth. It originates in a sensual passion. It rests on a fickle foundation. This is why the poet sings thus:—

“Love not me for comely grace  
For my pleasing eye or face,  
Nor for any outward part,  
No, nor for my constant heart,—  
For those may fail or turn to ill  
So thou and I shall sever ;  
Keep therefore a true woman's eye  
And love me still and know not why—  
So hast thou the same reason still  
To doat upon me for ever !

The ideal suggested in the above quotation is to love a man for his own sake. Is this possible in matrimony? A good mother loves the son for his own sake. It is not every mother that is capable of such selfless love. Such love may exist, though rarely, between mother and son, brothers and sisters. It is unthinkable in matrimony. The very idea of matrimony has its root in selfishness. The false notion of true

love or love at first sight engendered by light literature and strengthened by modern materialism has clothed marriage in such a dazzling colour of exuberant fancy and exaggerated expectation that it begins to fade shortly after consummation and disappointment stares either party in the face. Goethe in his immortal work, makes Faust tell Margaret, "One glance one word, one little word from thee, I value more than all the wisdom of the world's wisest ones." What was the sequel of all such love?

The two following sonnets written by a passionate and self-less lover, most intimate with the author, will show the extent to which this false sentiment can affect the life of man.

1

O'er the past fondly do I roam, alas !  
 My own heart-ache's cause to find; but I see  
 Your face I love, here, there, where'er I pass.  
 Dear charmer, dost thou hold my life of me?  
 Even like the blithesome moon of glorious night  
 As some huge mountain-cloud rolls over on high,  
 Recalls her light, black-robes the night; so I,  
 Know me, when thou art not my eyes to light  
 Am shrouded in darksome melancholy.  
 Now all search is done, my best prize is won.  
 At last I know, my heart thy best ally:  
 Know thou my mind, my best reflex, be thou my moon!  
 Answer, who envies not, my light of life.  
 My gentle maid, him that 'll call thee wife?

## 2

Thou, first fairest daughter to Virtue's son!  
His pride, my joy, wherefore art thou silent?  
Is it a worldly care thy heart doth rent?  
No, sure, heavenly thought thy soul hath won.  
Eyes of thine, sweet editors of thy face!  
Incandescent with fire of inward thought,  
Submit a page of love and beauty to correct  
Misread minds and wrong impressions errase.  
Yet my mind misgives me; even while I  
Here stand on the raised Hill of Time  
Elevated two and twenty summers high,  
Alone, below, thine eyes peer into mine  
Responsive to my heart's earnest appeal.  
Truly thou art love-sick or I, my angel reveal!

It will probably interest as well as instruct the reader to learn the epilogue of such love. The poor soul is now so shocked with disappointment that he cannot even bear to think that he had ever loved. It is this circumstance that makes the poet take refuge in "manly heart" and stoic indifference and exclaim:—

"Great or good or kind or fair,  
I will ne'er the more despair;  
If she love me, this believe,  
I will die ere she shall grieve;  
If she slight me, when I woo,



I can scorn and let her go;  
For if she be not for me,  
What care I for whom she be ?

The only right solution of the problem of marriage consists in not regarding it as a social contract or as designed for sensual pleasure but as a duty enjoined by God when he said, "Multiply and replenish the earth." Marriage is not only a union of bodies but of souls. This is the Hindu view of life. It should be regarded as an indissoluble bond. We should love those that we marry. It does not mean that we should marry thoughtlessly or indiscriminately. We should make the very best choice we can. But once the choice is made, and marriage relation established, the union should be indissoluble and must continue for evermore.

Serene will be our days and bright  
And happy will our nature be  
When love is an unerring light  
And Joy its own security."

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## IX

### ADVERSITY.

“Thy form benign, O Goddess, wear,  
Thy wilder influence impart,  
Thy philosophic train be there,  
To soften, not to wound thy heart.”

Adversity and prosperity are relative terms. The one cannot be conceived without the other. They form the dual aspect of the same idea. They are like good and evil, heat and cold, pleasure and pain. The conception of evil is necessary for that of good. One who knows not evil knows not good. Similarly we see that pain is necessary for the enjoyment of pleasure. Pleasure is most pleasurable when it follows pain. A feast is best enjoyed after a long fast. Water will taste like nectar when sweetened by long-felt thirst. Thus pain is necessary for the mental conception as well as the physical enjoyment of pleasure. Prosperity means the possession in plenty of the various sources of pleasure. Adversity means extreme want, extreme pain, or extreme sorrow. Prosperity implies abundance of pleasure; adversity exces-

sive pain. Pleasure culminates in prosperity and pain in adversity.

Adversity reminds us that pleasure is not the goal of life. The greatest man is he who is neither dazzled by prosperity nor deterred by adversity and who welcomes alike both pleasure and pain.

“Man wants but little here below  
Nor wants that little long.”

“It is true greatness to have in one the frailty of a man and the security of a God.” True greatness despises both pleasure and pain. Moral improvement is the goal of man. Spiritual perfection is the end of existence. Pleasure and pain are incidental to our imperfect life. Pain does more good to us than pleasure. Adversity is more wholesome than prosperity.

Adversity always reminds us of God and sometimes drives us into the lap of Providence. It was in a moment of adversity that Draupadi resigned herself into the hands of Sri Krishna. It was adversity that brought salvation to Gajendra (the elephant king). Sri Rama looked upon Kaikeyi as his greatest benefactress. But for Kaikeyi there would have been no Ramayana. The Ramayana, the first and greatest poem of the world, a song of perfect beauty and perfect



harmony, a literary masterpiece of transcendent excellence, and embodiment of the highest and deepest truths, ethical, philosophical, and spiritual, this is a product of adversity. Dante wrote *Divina Comedia* in exile and poverty. When the Archbishop of Toledo visited the French Ambassador at Madrid, there was a talk about the author of 'Don Quixote' and about his poverty. "What?" exclaimed one of the Frenchmen, "Why is he not then maintained out of the public treasury?" "Heaven forbid!" was the reply "that his necessities should be ever relieved, since it is his poverty that makes the world rich." *Gita Rahasya* by Lokamanya Tilak was written in prison. It was adversity that immortalised the Pandavas. When Sri Krishna told Kunti to ask a boon, she prayed for adversity. Sri Krishna expressed astonishment at the request, and wanted to know her reason. She replied that adversity would make her constantly meditate on Sri Krishna. It is adversity that enables man to know himself and become himself. It is adversity that has contributed to the real progress of the world.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity." Adversity calls forth the dormant faculties of man. Adversity is bitter; but its uses are sweet. Its

sweetness depends upon its proper use. Adversity sometimes drives men to suicide. Adversity is often the cause of immorality and crime. It is sweet to those that can use it, that can despise it, that can conquer it and turn it to good account. It is sweet to those that can "justify the ways of God to man." It is bitter to those that succumb to it. Adversity is sweet to the strong and bitter to the weak. It does good to those whose faculties are asleep and need provocation; but it hurts those who are internally feeble and lack the spirit of self-reliance. It was Gandhi's failure to grasp this secret of human psychology that caused the death of the Non-co-operation Movement in India. Adversity is no school for the majority. It is the proper soil for the flower of humanity. It is the training ground for the leaders of mankind.

"The good things which belong to prosperity are to be wished; but the good things which belong to adversity are to be admired. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes."

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## X.

### FRIENDSHIP.

“Whoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god.”—Aristotle.

“Society, friendship and love  
Divinely bestowed upon man  
Had I the wings of a dove,  
How soon would I taste you again?”

Man is a social being. He naturally seeks company. “A crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love.” True friendship is based on love. Love manifests itself in different forms. We love our parents, our wives and children, our brothers and sisters, our kith and kin, our country and our home; but love of friends stands on a higher level.

True friendship is one of the highest blessings of life. It is the special prerogative of a very few happy souls. The term friendship is often misapplied & misunderstood. Very few have the good fortune of having a true friend. True friendship is founded on geniality of tempera-



ment, sympathetic view of life, and mutual love free from all selfish interest and selfish consideration. We are naturally attracted to some and repelled by others and we know not why. Even the greatest philanthropist whose heart flows out to the whole mankind, and who can say with Mahatma Gandhi that he hates none, may have a few friends whose company he seeks to vent forth his thoughts and whom he loves in a manner which defies analysis and description. The story of Damon and Pytheus is too well-known to be detailed here. They were perfect patterns of true friendship. Their mutual devotion melted even the cruel heart of King Dionysius. Blessed are those who enjoy the divine gift of true friendship !

We cannot choose our parents, brothers or sisters. We are bound to our kith and kin by indissoluble ties of blood relationship. We are morally bound to love them. But we *choose* our friends; rather we are attracted to them by irresistible love. It is a union of hearts. It is purer and higher than conjugal affection, which is not altogether unalloyed with selfishness. In the Merchant of Venice, Bassanio, the selfish lover, tells his friend,

“ Antonio, I am married to a wife  
Which is as dear to me as life itself;

But life itself, my wife, and all the world  
Are not with me esteemed above thy life"  
Friendship is above all moral obligation  
and social contract.

Sometimes true friendship develops under differences of habit, taste, view, and sentiment. This may appear an inexplicable mystery. Probably then trivial differences are submerged under the predominance of spiritual unity. Unity in essentials not only covers but imparts lustre and beauty to diversity in non-essentials. It is said that "birds of a feather flock together." But friendship does not flourish in a flock, nor can it rest long on the flimsy foundation of feathers. It needs a firmer basis. It grows from a deeper root.

Books are at best said to be companions in solitude. This implies the inferiority of books to companions. But a friend is much more than a companion. A book is but the record of ancient wisdom; a friend is the vehicle of living thought. I have to seek a book; a friend seeks *me*. A book is in my hands; I am in the hands of my friend. I have to understand the book; my friend understands me. Books at best provoke thought; Friends provoke both thought and speech. It is impossible to exaggerate the

wholesome influence of a good book; that of a good friend is indescribable. "Whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communication, and discoursing with another, he tosseth his thoughts more easily, marshalleth them more orderly, he seeth how they look when they are turned into words, finally he waxeth wiser than himself and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation."

A friend is but the reflex of our inner self. That is why we love him. Friendly love is but a manifestation of self-love. A friend is an embodiment of our aspiration; that is why we respect him. We appreciate his merits but overlook his defects. "Hatred stirreth up strife but love covereth all sins." A good friend saves us from evil ways; a bad one leads us into temptation. A good friend is an inspiration to virtue. We strive to please him. We struggle to merit his good opinion. Friendship enhances happiness and mitigates misery. "Social sorrow loses half its pain."

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## XI.

### CHARACTER.

“The prosperity of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenues, nor on the strength of its fortifications, nor on the beauty of its public buildings; but it consists in the number of its cultivate citizens, in its men of education, enlightenment and character; here are to be found its true interest, its chief strength, its real power.”—MARTIN LUTHER.

What is meant by character? Character is a rare compound which defies analysis and description. It is the product of the combined operation of various forces, internal and external. It is closely allied to personality; nay it is the basis of true personality. Its outward manifestation is conduct. Some of the elements which form it are Truthfulness, Reliableness. Dutifulness, Honesty, Self-respect, Charity and Magnanimity. These are essential to good character. “Character is formed by a variety of minute circumstances more or less under the regulation and control of the individual.”

Greatness is not the necessary outcome of character. It is not possible for every man to

become great; but it is possible for every man to cultivate good character. But it should not be forgotten that true greatness can rest only on character. Genius may exist without character; but it can never attain to true greatness. Sheridan might have ruled the world if he had possessed reliableness of character but "his genius was sacrificed to his irritability." Talent may be without character and character may be without talent. But even genius cannot attain permanent greatness without character. No nation or individual can become truly great without moral force. Greatness without character is ephemeral. The secret of Luther's greatness was his honesty of purpose, and intellectual and moral intrepidity. "Every word of Luther rang through Germany like a trumpet. His words were half-battles."

"The abiding sense of duty is the very crown of character." A man of character does his duty at all hazards. He boldly defies public opinion. He does not steer to the changing breeze of popularity. He is not affected by popular praise ; for,

"Praise too dearly loved or eagerly sought.  
Enfeebles the internal strength of thought."

His conscience is his perpetual guide. He is not disheartened by failure or disappointment. Patient toil regardless of reward is the foundation of character. Confidence and courage are also necessary ingredients of character, for no great achievement is possible without them.

A man of character is never vindictive; for "treason seldom dwells with courage." Work is indispensable to character; for character will never develop without setting the heart on a noble end and pursuing it with untiring toil and ceaseless devotion. Character becomes manifest in work. Indolence corrupts character; for "An idle man's brain is the workshop of the Devil." Character is inconsistent with sensual indulgence. Sensuality is the pastime of the indolent. When the heart yearns for achievement, there will be no time for self-indulgence. Character is defective without love—love of God and Man. Strength is cruel without love, as wealth is baneful without charity.

Man is said to be a creature of circumstances; so character is the product of environment. The question of character and circumstances has given rise to divergent views. But the biographies of great men show that they have carried their way to greatness through



apparently insurmountable obstacles. But this cannot apply to the generality of mankind. Moreover a great man is born and not made. He creates his own environment. He moulds the life of his country and of humanity. But the greatness of a country depends not only upon her great men but upon the character of the majority. A Mahatma or a Lokamanya cannot save India. India must rise on the solid foundation of the character of her citizens.

“Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,  
A breath can make them as a breath has made;  
But a bold peasantry, the country's pride,  
When once destroyed, can ne'er be supplied.”

The ordinary man is generally a creature of circumstances. His character is moulded by his environment. Hence it is necessary to consider the environment best suited to the building of character; for a nation's greatness does not depend upon its size but upon the number of its men of character.

“It is not growing like a tree  
In bulk, doth make man better be.”

The greatness of a nation does not depend upon its population. The people of Israel were a small nation and yet have exercised the most

powerful influence on the history of the world. Greece was not big, & yet the modern civilization is but the product of Greek culture. Hence the importance of national character in the work of nation-building.

Home is the place where the foundation is laid for character. The first impressions are the strongest and last longest. Just as the child learns to speak, it imbibes all the elements of character. Youth is the seed-time of life. "The Child is father of the Man." "Just as the twig is bent, the tree is inclined." Mother is the mistress of home. She is the maker of the future nation. Hence the importance of the education of women. The influence of a good mother is seen in the biographies of Coriolanus and Napoleon. The status of woman is the test of a nation. A nation is great in proportion to the greatness of her women. The ignorance and incapacity of the Indian mother is the root cause of our present degradation. India was great when her women received the highest culture and were treated with utmost respect. Then she could produce a Sita and a Draupadi. "While woman is the natural cherisher of infancy and the instructor of childhood, she is also the guide and counsellor of youth, and the

confidant and companion of manhood, in her various relations of mother, sister, beloved and wife. In short the influence of woman more or less affects, for good or for evil, the entire destinies of man."

The education of women is indispensable to the production of good mothers, sisters, and wives. Character is formed at home, strengthened at school & tested in actual life. Hence the necessity for a sound system of education. The teacher should himself be an embodiment of good character. He should teach more by example than by precept. The system of education in India is a show and a farce; the educational institutions are scanty and unsound, the method poor and defective; the instruments weak and powerless; the products sorry mediocrities. It is no wonder then that three hundred millions of the human race should be grovelling in "ignoble ease" without character and without patriotism, without co-operation and without union.

This trend of thought brings to my mind one of the most beautiful sonnets written in this century by a living poet of stout heart and rare vision, who, it is sad to think has had to wait long to win his proper heritage of public recognition. He says that in India,



“Millions of beings rise and strive and pass  
Like morning dew upon the summer grass.”

The force of character can best be studied and grasped not in its dry analysis and description in the abstract, but in its concrete manifestation in the lives and utterances of the greatest men of the world—Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Confucius, Zoroaster, the Prophet of Islam, Omar Khayam, Lakamanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. “Men of genuine excellence in every station of life command the spontaneous homage of mankind. It is natural to believe in them, to have confidence in them and to imitate them. All that is good in the world is upheld by them and without their presence in it, the world would not be worth living in.”

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## XII.

### THE USES OF BOOKS.

“Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business.”—Bacon.

Books are the record of ancient wisdom, the intellectual treasures we have inherited from the past. It is our duty to transmit them to posterity untainted and replenished. The intellectual life of man would have been poor, indeed, without books. Past literature contains the best thoughts of our ancestors on the problems of life. They facilitate future thought. Without books man will have to begin again. Books put him in possession of the intellectual wealth of centuries past. They constitute a solid foundation for the erection of a grand edifice. Man has only to study the substratum and build the superstructure. Books link the Present with the Past and the Future and nullify the limitations of Time; so that man's progress may be an eternal continuity advancing towards Ultimate Unity.

Books are a source of inspiration to a high and noble ideal of life; for they describe the lives and utterances of the greatest men of the past; they describe how they lived and thought and fought the battle of life. A glorious past is an inspiration to a still more glorious future. Past glory fills us with pride and ambition. It is an incentive to strenuous effort and vigorous enthusiasm. Man is naturally weak in body and in mind. He is a constant victim to the distractions of the senses. Hence the necessity for good books which are a source of inspiration to bold achievements, which provoke thought and purify the heart, and which inculcate high ideals and manly pursuits.

Books enhance happiness and mitigate misery. They make prosperity more pleasurable and adversity less painful. They afford pleasure in affluence and solace in affliction. They are the best safeguard against the abuse of wealth. Boredom is the general complaint of the rich. They therefore resort to the theatre, gambling, and similar vices to seek relief from monotony. Those who can enjoy the pleasure of reading hardly stand in need of any other pastime. Intellectual pleasure is the highest within the reach of man; for "song charms



the sense but eloquence the soul." One who has cultivated a taste for reading will not seek meaner amusements. Books render a higher service in distress. When we are in great sorrow owing to a great calamity, we are apt to lose heart and may even lose life. In such a calamity, a chapter of the Bhagavadgita or the Upanishads, or a page of Plato or Emerson, or of Milton or Wordsworth will afford us greater relief, and impart new life to our drooping spirits than the condolence of a hundred friends. When we learn that greater calamities have overtaken greater men, and that the goal of life is not happiness but the attainment of moral perfection and spiritual freedom through suffering and struggle, our calamity will appear to us in a new light and will arm us with the resolution to fight the battle of life with a manly heart.

Books are companions of solitude. Man is a social being. He naturally seeks company. How often we run after friends! But books are better friends than men. Unlike men they do not dissemble. They speak plainly to all men alike. They conceal nothing. They are companions of the rich and poor alike. Their advice is honest and their instruction ennobling.

Books are an aid to education. Literary education is impossible without books. They facilitate intellectual culture. The invention of printing has led to wider diffusion of knowledge and to the rapid progress of education. Education would be an uphill work without books.

The best books are those which most resemble good actions. They enlarge and liberalise the mind; they preserve it against vulgar worldliness. They tend to produce high-minded cheerfulness and equanimity of character. They fashion and shape and humanize the mind. In the Scottish Universities the schools in which the classics are studied are appropriately called "The Humanity classes."

The value of books should not be exaggerated. The danger of too much reading should be avoided. Reading is a means and not an end. Reading solely for pleasure is vicious. Reading should be an aid to culture. Too much reading hinders original thinking. Perhaps it is truly said of most of our distinguished professors, that they read too much to avoid the language and the thoughts of others. They illustrate the quaint confession of a distinguished writer of the 19th century that his love

of books was such that he would gladly lose himself in other men's minds. He says, "When I am not walking I am reading: I cannot sit and think; My books do the thinking for me." Distinction between learning and wisdom should not be forgotten. Learning is knowledge derived from the study of books; wisdom is knowledge derived from the study of actual life. A learned man may be wise or otherwise; a wise man may be learned or illiterate. Books are the record of past wisdom; Life the vehicle of present experience. It is good to be learned; better to be wise. best to be both learned and wise. The following admonition of Bacon will be found instructive:—

"To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgement wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar; they perfect nature and are perfected by experience."

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### XIII

## THE CHOICE OF BOOKS.

This is an age of books. This is an age in which true literary merit receives ready acknowledgement and appreciation. Hence literature like every other learned profession is crowded with countless competitors. The improved machinery of printing renders easy the work of publication. The improved means of communication have brought the most distant parts of the world into closer contact and greater sympathy and mutual understanding, so that when a new idea is born in any country, it is wafted across the seas and its echoes are heard from the farthest shore. This is an additional incentive to literary activity. Hundreds of new books are now published every week on a variety of topics; hundreds of standard journals stare us in the face every day: there are already hundreds of ancient books of established merit which cannot safely be neglected, not to mention a considerable number of the greatest literary masterpieces of world-wide excellence; so that the sincere reader bent on progress

stands aghast at the stupendous mass of literature before him and without some principle to guide him in his study is in danger of wandering about amidst the sea of books without making any progress, as a ship without a rudder is at the mercy of wind, wave, and current. Hence the need of right choice. Hence the importance of this subject.

The question does not apply to our legitimate studies. The lawyer cannot neglect the law reports. The doctor cannot dispense with the medical books. The physicist cannot ignore the new publications on physics. The chemist must keep himself abreast of the times. The educationist cannot do without the educational literature. The teacher should pay special attention to the subject he has to teach. The student is bound to study the prescribed books. There is no room for choice in professional, technical and scholastic studies.

But man should not be sacrificed to the lawyer or doctor. We may follow different walks of life to earn a living. To get on is not the goal of life. We should not forget that we are first men and then anything else. This aspect of life, this human aspect of our existence, is altogether neglected in modern culture.

Specialisation is the bane of modern education. We do not make a churlish objection to specialisation. Specialise we must to rise to the summit in a particular sphere. It should not be at the sacrifice of general humanisation. A good lawyer is a worthless commodity if he be not a good man. What avails it to gain the whole world if you lose the soul? This humanising aspect of education received special emphasis in Greek culture. It was the sole aim of Ancient culture in India. It has been sacrificed to the materialistic turn of modern thought. Hence the imperative necessity for making a proper choice of general study, so that only such books are read as will on the one hand counter-act the baneful effect of specialization and on the other conduce to the developement of such instincts and such qualities as will help the advancement of human progress and the realisation of human destiny.

Reading should not be resorted to merely for pleasure. Reading is an intellectual exercise. Only such books should be read as provoke thought. Light reading needs no mental effort. The constant habit of novel reading weakens the mind and renders it incapable of exertion. Thus the main object of reading as an



intellectual exercise is frustrated. Books that only amuse and please and are not thought-provoking should be avoided. Pleasure is not the end of reading. It is nevertheless invariably the result of good reading. Physical exercise is not resorted to for pleasure; but the athlete always delights in exercising his limbs. Pleasure is not the goal of life; but it invariably follows right living. Similarly care is needed in choosing right books; they afford both intellectual exercise and pleasure. "Some books are to be tasted; others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested." The books that belong to the last category should be our constant companions.

Lubbock gives a list of one hundred books as indispensable for every reader. Such an arbitrary list, far from being exhaustive, is often misleading and introduces a deadening uniformity where there should be full scope for variety of intellectual and moral standard. We shall suggest certain principles and leave the choice to the reader himself. The oldest books are generally the best; for the intellect has shown a tendency to degenerate with the lapse of time. In the west, Plato has not had his equal in philosophic sublimity; Aristotle has not been

rivalled in intellectual excellence. Homer has not been surpassed in poetic grandeur. In India the Ramayana, the first Sanskrit poem is also the best. The Upanishads seem to have exhausted all philosophy. The Bhagavadgita contains an inexhaustible treasure of spiritual truths of transcendental beauty, which remain to this day unexplored to the bottom. Even Sri Sankaracharya of unsurpassed intellectual grandeur could expect no hearing till he justified his system in the light of the Bhagavadgita. Hence the first book on a subject is generally the best. Originals, if possible, should be preferred to translations. Commentaries generally confuse. Commentaries and translations mark an age of intellectual degeneracy. The commentator should not be made to stand between the original writer and the reader. An attempt to understand a great poem with the help of a commentary dwarfs the intellect, dims the understanding and delays the progress. The following quotation from Bacon will unfold to the reader the extensive range of study to be traversed for the attainment of intellectual excellence:—

“ Histories make men wise, Poets witty, the Mathematics subtle; Natural philosophy deep; Moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend.”

Such wide reading cannot be safely prescribed for all. But no man can neglect with impunity the best books on the problems of life. Man is a born philosopher. Philosophy is the science of right living. Truth is the goal of philosophy. Pursuit of Truth is the parent of progress. Perception of Truth is an inspiration to righteousness. Books are like companions. Good books are an inspiration to right living. Bad books tempt us into evil ways.

Thomas hood says, "My books kept me from the ring, the dogpit, the tavern, and the saloon. The closest associate of Pope and Addison, the mind accustomed to the noble, though, silent discourse of Shakespeare and Milton will hardly seek or put up with low company and slaves." "The reading" says Keightley "of *Paradise Lost* for the first time forms or should form an era in the life of every one possessed of taste and poetic feeling." It has already been stated, it is not possible to give an exhaustive list of books suited to the different tastes and temperaments of all readers. A reference to the experience of a few great men may serve as a useful guide. Cicero was the favourite author of Erasmus, the great scholar. It was the accidental perusal of Cicero's "*Hortensius*" that first reclaimed St. Augustine from his immoral life. Milton's fav-



ourite books were Homer, Ovid, and Euripides. Pitt took special delight in Milton. Burke's companions were Demosthenes, Milton and Bolingbroke. Dante's favourite was Virgil. Macaulay and Carlyle delighted in Dante and Milton. "Robert Hall sought relief in Dante from the rocking pains of spinal disease." It was the perusal of the "Farie Queen" that evoked the genius of Keats. Cowley says that, after reading and admiring it, he became irrecoverably a poet. It was the perusal of "Telemachus" that moulded the mind of Bentham. He says, "that romance may be regarded as the foundation stone of my whole character. The first dawning on my mind of the "principle of Utility" may, I think, be traced to it." Cobbet's first favourite was Swift's "Tale of the Tub." Napoleon's range of reading was very wide; but his favourite authors were Homer, Virgil, and Tasso. He once said to an officer, 'Read again the poet of Achilles and devour Ossian. Those are the poets who lift up the soul and give to man a colossal greatness.' He disliked, as he said, "the bombast and tinsel" of voltaire. The principal favourites of the Duke of Wellington were Clarendon, Bishop Butler and Smith's "Wealth of Nations." Goethe attributed much of his education to the "Vicar of Wakefield"

## XIV.

### THE ELEMENTS OF GOODNESS.

“Goodness I call the habit and goodness of nature, the inclination. This, of all the virtues and dignities of the mind, is the greatest, being the character of the Deity, and without it man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing, no better than a vermin.”—BACON.

What does goodness mean? What are the characteristics of a good man? What is the connotation of the term *good*? Its meaning varies with the object to which it is applied. A good knife means a knife that cuts well. A good pen is one that writes well. A good teacher is one that teaches well. A good student is one that studies well. A good lawyer is one that is well-versed in law and capable of properly conducting a case. A good judge is one who properly administers justice.

A good husband may or may not be a good master. A good father is not necessarily a good husband. A good son may prove a bad father. A good father may be a bad king like Charles I.

There are certain duties attaching to each function. Every situation involves certain responsibilities. He who is placed in a certain position is bound to perform the duties attaching to it. One who performs them well is called good in that position. One who is good in one situation may be bad in another. Everything in the world is intended for a definite purpose. A thing that serves its purpose well is called good. A knife is called good when it serves well the purpose for which it is intended.

It is therefore clear that a man deserves to be called good when he satisfactorily fulfills the object of his existence. One who fails to do it is called a bad man. One may be a good lawyer but a bad man. A good judge is not necessarily a good man. We are very fond of talking about the primary rights of humanity; we never forget the importance of the primary necessities of life; but very seldom do we think of our primary duties. The duties attaching to our profession are only of secondary importance. They differ as widely as the different walks of life. The primary duties of man are the same for all men. We are all travelling consciously or unconsciously towards the same goal. As truly as there is



but one God, there is but one destiny for man. The roads may be different, the vehicles may be various, but the end is the same. What is this end ? What is the goal of life ? What is the object of human existence ? This is the Problem of Problems. It is the problem of life, of religion and of philosophy. He who has solved this problem aright not only intellectually and theoretically but also practically is a good man. He is a man in the real sense of the word.

It is not possible or necessary for every man to become a good lawyer, a good writer, a good speaker, a good musician, a good philosopher, or a good poet. But it is within the reach of every one to become a good man; nay it is the primary duty of every one to become a good man. Just as a bad knife is thrown away as useless, a man who is not good in the true sense is worthless in the eye of God. His life is wasted if he does not fulfil the primary object of his existence. Goodness is our only goal. It is our only bond of unity. It is our primary duty. All others are secondary and subsidiary. It is the only duty common to all mankind. It is not a means but the primary end.

The question naturally takes us to the root problem of religion and philosophy. Neverthe-

less it admits of no controversy, because it constitutes the very essence of religious life and philosophic thought. It rises majestic above the dust of religious conflict. The main characteristics of the greatest religions of the world have thus been put in a nut-shell:

In essentials Unity,  
In non-essentials Diversity,  
In all things Charity.

The elements of goodness are among the basic principles of all religions.

We have institutions for manufacturing soldiers and statesmen, teachers and lawyers, artists and artisans, clerks and mechanics, but not one for training good men. The educational system all over the world is conspicuous for its common neglect of the ultimate destiny of man. It is a bread and butter system of education. It ignores the soul. It is a godless culture. Hence the evil of modern materialism; hence the moral bankruptcy of modern civilization.

Goodness in popular parlance implies certain passive or negative virtues. A good man in popular language means one who does no harm to others. Goodness is often a sign

of weakness. It often springs from cowardice. It is not the outcome of a sense of duty but the evasion of it. Forbearance is weak and passive when it springs from fear. True forbearance which indicates true goodness is founded on strength and courage. It indicates a strong sense of duty. It signifies strength and love.

True goodness is based on the realisation of the unity of the universal life. It teaches that mankind must rise or fall together. The peace and progress of the world must remain for ever a dream so long as there is one subject nation in existence. The salvation of humanity will be postponed so long as there is a single soul struggling in bondage. True goodness sees God in every object of Creation. Thus the realisation of Universal unity naturally begets Universal love. But what is universal love but the highest generalisation of Self-love? It is but the expansion of the self to the full circle of the universe. It needs no talent to realise this ideal. It is not intellect that can lead us to this state of supreme bliss. It is the heart that can guide us thither. The purification of the heart is the first step in the path of goodness.

Aristotle's portrait of the Magnanimous



man, that is to say, the True Gentleman equally applies to the Good man:—

“The Magnanimous man will behave with moderation under both good fortune and bad. He will know how to be exalted and how to be abased. He will neither be delighted with success nor grieved by failure. He will neither shun danger nor seek it, for there are few things which he cares for. He is reticent and somewhat slow of speech, but speaks his mind openly and boldly when occasion calls for it. He is not apt to admire, for nothing is great to him. He overlooks injuries. He is not given to talk about himself or about others; for he does not care that he himself should be praised or that other people should be blamed. He does not cry out about trifles and craves help from none.” This portrait contains most of the elements of goodness. What is lacking in this description is that of universal love which has already been referred to.

The life of a great world-teacher like Lord Buddha or Jesus Christ is one embodiment of all the elements of true goodness. They are fully described in the Sermon on the Mount. They are clearly enunciated in the teachings of Lord Buddha. The lives of these great

teachers are eternal monuments of goodness. It does not require a great intellect to understand them. What is needed is a pure heart inspired by earnestness and sincerity. This will enable a man to tread the path of goodness which leads to the Place of Peace, which once attained is attained for evermore.

It is best to conclude as we have begun with a quotation from Bacon:—"The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall; but in charity there is no excess; neither can angel nor man come in danger by it."

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## XV.

### THE ELEMENTS OF GREATNESS.

Greatness is not the goal of life. Goodness is the end of existence. The evolution of the world tends to the production of goodness and not greatness. Greatness is not within the reach of every man; whereas it is possible for each and every man to become good. Goodness is our ultimate destiny. When all men become good, no man is great. Goodness is normal, but greatness is abnormal. The tendency of human evolution is toward the extinction of greatness by the development of goodness and the equalization of mankind. Thus greatness is incidental to imperfect evolution.

Greatness is generally the product of genius. Genius is a divine gift bestowed on a few favourite mortals. "Many are called but few are chosen." Greatness is of different grades and shades. It is also special as well as general. Special greatness means excellence in any special branch of human activity. One may be a great poet, or a great musician, a great soldier, a great statesman, a great law-



yer or a great king. A great statesman is not necessarily a great man. Greatness in a particular sphere of human life is called special greatness. Specialization is one of the great impediments to the development of the general accomplishments of humanity. Man is sacrificed to the lawyer, doctor or the politician. General greatness is excellence in the general accomplishments of humanity. A great Scientist may or may not be a great man. A great king may be wanting in general greatness. It is not every king that can rise to the ideal of Sri Rama who is not only the ideal king but the ideal son, the ideal brother, the ideal disciple, the ideal husband, and the ideal man.

General greatness also may co-exist with special greatness. There may be a great poet like Valmiki or Milton, a great scientist like Newton or Raman who is also a great man. But special greatness does not imply general greatness. It is not our present look-out to consider the path that leads to poetic or literary excellence, greatness as a lawyer or as statesman or any other greatness of a special nature. General greatness is the subject of our consideration. We have to consider the essential characteristics of a great man.

A man is considered great when he secures the homage of his fellow-men. A man can easily become great in a crowd of little men. A great man is the idol of his fellow-men. He may excite envy or emulation; but he is none the less an object of worship. He may be disliked at heart, but is none the less praised in public. The essence of greatness consists in the homage of mankind. Command over our fellow-men is the general ambition all over the world. One man rises majestic on the ashes of his fellow-men. One soul is exalted to divinity on the ruins of countless souls. Hence it is an unrighteous ambition to become great. But it is the universal ambition of men to-day. The homage of our fellowmen is the general aim of human activity. It underlies all our desires; it lies at the root of our desire for wealth, rank, power, name and fame. Wealth becomes useless if it does not extend our influence with our fellow-men. Domination over others is the common pursuit of all mankind. Different men pursue it in different ways. The majority of men seek to realise it through wealth. A small minority pursue the paths of rank and power. A still smaller number seek to realise it through the arduous path of public

fame. The paths are many but the goal is the same. Many attempt, but a few succeed; for, greatness by its very nature cannot come to many. It is essentially the prerogative of a select few. A man is considered great in proportion to the extent of his influence. The greatest man is he who is the idol of the largest number of his fellow-men. The greatest man is he whose word is law to the majority of mankind. Thus the greatness of one implies the slavery of the many.

But greatness based on external conditions is false and transitory. A wealthy man is surrounded by a herd of flatterers. He is able to exact their homage. They are all under his influence. The secret of this influence is not in his inherent qualities but in his wealth. They idolise not the man but his wealth. Their homage is paid to the man on account of his wealth; and only so long as he possesses it. Such greatness rests on a fickle foundation. Solon said to Croesus, "Sir, if any other come that hath better iron than you, he will be the master of all this gold."

False greatness is attended with false homage. False homage is of two kinds—(1) homage paid to man not on account of his innate



qualities but owing to an external accident such as wealth; (2) homage which is not voluntary but compulsory, such as homage paid to an unworthy monarch, or to some other person of high rank who has the power of doing harm. We honour and obey a tyrant out of fear. We outwardly respect a high officer though we inwardly consider him unworthy of respect. This is compulsory homage. This is not true homage. Nevertheless people are satisfied with such false respect and false homage, just as they are pleased with flattery even though they know it to be so. Greatness which depends on such external conditions is not real greatness.

Sri Rama gladly forsook his kingdom and went to the forest. His greatness rested on the inherent strength of his arm, on his large-heartedness, and on the greatness of his own soul. This is true greatness. Such greatness furthers human progress. False greatness is tyrannical; it enslaves men; it delays our advancement. Hence all righteous souls scorn it. Hence the best men renounce wealth, rank and power, and embrace poverty, so that they may, the better serve humanity.

True greatness never comes through effort.

True greatness eludes the grasp of those who seek it. Public influence is not the aim of the truly great. The homage of mankind is the inevitable consequence but not the studied endeavour of true greatness. It was not for the purpose of attaining name and fame that John Hampden refused to pay Ship Money nor was this the motive which actuated Martin Luther to defy the Pope. It was not to achieve eternal glory that Jesus died on the Cross; nor was it for the purpose of becoming an object of Universal worship that Lord Buddha renounced his kingdom, wife and child and fled to the forest to embrace poverty and asceticism. It was for the purpose of meditating on God and Man, to find out the means of delivering humanity out of the pit of sin and misery. It was out of pity for humanity that Lord Buddha embraced poverty. It is the abiding sense of duty that leads to true greatness. Hampden was inspired by a strong sense of duty in refusing to pay the iniquitous tax. He would rather die than submit to political tyranny. Abhorrence of religious tyranny was the motive which inspired Luther to exclaim. "If I had five hundred heads, I would lose them all rather than recant my article concerning *faith*". It

was to save humanity that Jesus died on the Cross. His sacrifice served as an inspiration to countless martyrs who triumphantly marched to death as if to a marriage festival. True homage of mankind never comes to one who seeks it. It is the inevitable accompaniment of true greatness. A strong sense of duty and a readiness to die rather than give up duty is the first element of true greatness. Death has no terrors to great souls. "To none" said George Wilson, "is life so sweet as to those who have lost all fear to die." John Ruskin adds, "He does not know how to live who does not know when to die." The Conquest of fear of death is a most essential element of true greatness; for he who fears the son cannot conquer the father.

A truly great man regards himself not as a master but as a servant of his fellowmen. The salvation of humanity is his goal. To serve his fellowmen is his delight. His heart overflows with the milk of human kindness. He is ever inspired with pity for the struggling humanity. The sufferings of his fellowmen affect him like personal calamities. It is only such a soul that can carry the world forward. Such a man is a born leader of mankind. He is an embodiment of their highest hopes and noblest aspirations. In the words of Carlyle, "He is a living light



fountain which it is good and pleasant to be near; the light which enlightens us, which has enlightened the darkness of this world; and this, not as a kindled lamp only but rather as a natural luminary, shining by the gift of heaven; a flowing light-fountain, as I say, of native original insight, of manhood and heroic nobleness, in whose radiance all souls feel that it is well with them."

Universal homage is the reward of universal love. Universal love is based on the realization of the unity of universal life. Thus we see that Universal love is an essential characteristic of true greatness. A man's greatness is in proportion to the width of his love. A man who loves the people of a village becomes the great man in that village. The greatest patriot is one who does the greatest good to his country. The greatest philanthropist is he, whose heart is large enough to love the whole mankind, and who devotes himself to the service of the entire humanity. Mahatma Gandhi is the greatest of living men because he hates none. Though he hates evil, he does not hate bad men. He is like the sandal wood that imparts its fragrance even to the axe that cuts it. He blesses even those that harm

him. His heart re-echoes the sentiment of the last utterance of Jesus on the Cross:—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

The greatest man is the best prototype of humanity. He represents the highest ideal of man. He embodies the noblest aspirations of humanity. True greatness does not consist in originality. The value of originality is often over-estimated. Originality in the strictest sense, is a worthless commodity. A strictly original man is rarely understood, much less followed. True greatness consists in wisely following the people. A great man always meets the populace half-way. He partly follows them and partly leads them. He rightly understands them and makes himself rightly understood by them. Mahatma Gandhi was greatest when he represented the largest number of the people of this country. He is now a "broken reed" as he calls himself, because he no longer represents the aspirations of the majority.

But greatness is not an unmixed blessing. It has a bright as well as a dark side. After all, every man is his own saviour. "Envy is ignorance; and imitation is suicide." Greatness is good so long as it helps us to save ourselves and so long as it calls forth our dormant facul-

ties and makes us self-reliant. Greatness harms us if it reduces us to a state of unmanly dependence. Greatness is an evil if it enslaves our conscience. It is good if it is only to remind us that we too can become great and good. When we admire a great man, we should not forget that it is an ideal that we admire and that it is an ideal we should strive to realise. A great man becomes a tyrant, the moment he is deified and worshipped as a God, whose favour is sought as necessary to our salvation. Such has been the fate of the greatest men of the past. Jesus taught that every man could become like him. He reminded man of his highest duty and emphasized the doctrine of universal love. He clearly chalked out the path to the Place of Peace. He was the greatest friend of man. But his teachings have been misunderstood and perverted and he has been made the greatest enemy of man. The Christian is an aggressive imperialist and the tyrant of weaker peoples. This is the result of ignorance and superstition. Every man must realise the dignity of his own soul. The greatest help that I can receive from another is to know how to develop the divine in myself. I admire the great man because he has reached the goal,



which, I am striving to reach. I cannot reach it by merely worshipping the greatest man. I may worship him provided it be only to understand better how to reach the goal myself. God himself cannot save me even if I pray to Him day and night. Prayer is good so long as it is a help to concentrated effort. Prayer is harmful if it be for a Divine gift. Gifts demean and enslave even though they be divine. True prayer is but a heart-felt admiration of a cherished ideal. It will be fruitful of wholesome influence if it leads to a vigorous effort to realise the ideal. None can help me except myself. I admire a great soul because he provokes my higher self and guides me by his example. The best book can help me but to study my own thoughts. The greatest man can help me but to realise my own ideal. In this sense great men are benefactors of mankind. True greatness is a blessing to humanity. It will become a curse if it makes us forget our duty under the false impression that we can get our salvation as a gift by prayer and worship.

Great indeed is he who relieves physical distress; greater is he who imparts intellectual enlightenment; But the greatest of all, is the spiritual teacher of mankind.

## XVI.

### WHAT IS TRUTH ?

[The imperfectness of the chapter on Truthfulness is the only apology for this addition. This was first printed in the Servant, Calcutta, Friday, October 2, 1924, when the author was only a College Student]

God is the only Truth; all else is false. The Sanskrit word for Truth is Satyam, which means, God alone is. Nothing else can be said to be, as nothing else is permanent. Truth is eternal. All else is illusory and impermanent.

The distinction between Atman & Anatman is the beginning of True Knowledge. Spirit and Matter constitute the dual aspect of the manifested Universe. The existence and eternity of Spirit is no longer a disputed problem. It has risen cloudless above the dust of conflict and has met with almost universal acceptance. But the nature of Matter and its relation to Spirit are topics which constitute a battle-ground of bitter controversy. They have been instrumental in bringing into being several schools of philosophic thought and in disturbing the unity of the Brahmin caste, so that the illusory shades of philosophic differences are represented by

substantial barriers of separate sects, which have gained strength and stability from superstitious ignorance and spirit of exclusiveness, which have usurped the place of true religious knowledge and large-hearted devotion.

Thus, where there should have been only four castes, there are now four thousand. The real underlying differences are shadowy and unsubstantial; they are only philosophical, not religious. It would be irrelevant to go deeper into this question. God is the only truth according to Idealism; for Truth is eternal whereas the myriad forms of manifested creation are merely the passing phantoms of our imagination, the creation and dwelling place of an ignorant and imperfect mind.

Extreme idealism or Adwaitism totally denies the existence of matter. God is the only truth according to modified Adwaitism or Vishistadwaitism, because although matter or Prakriti *does* exist, its form is changeable, whereas, truth never changes in essence or in form. Moreover Prakriti has no independent existence apart from Purusha. The universe cannot exist independent of God. "In Him we live, move and have our being." Hence God is the only Truth.



In this highest sense, speech relating to God is the only True speech. All else is false. This is why the true devotee abstains from all discussion which does not relate to God, the only Truth. To one who has realised this highest meaning of Truth, the ordinary difference between truth and falsehood which obtains in the lower realms of thought would appear trivial and false. All manifestation is false. All forms are illusory. All phenomena are the projection of our own imagination. How can one of them be true and another false? All are equally false. The question of Truth and Falsehood does not arise in respect of them. One who has attained this state of mind is a Siddha. He is a Mukta-Jiva. He is a Transcendentalist. He has risen above the dual concepts of Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, Moral and Immoral. The attainment of this supreme state is the goal of religion. This highest reach of metaphysical imagination, this loftiest flight of philosophic thought, this sublimest conception of Parabrahman, is grand to conceive beautiful to contemplate, but hard to realise.

Truth, in its ordinary sense, is a social convenience. It is the very foundation of social life. Disregard of Truth will bring about disin-

tegration of society. Indifference to it will bring the world to an end.

It is a false complaint that the majority of men are liars. Man is naturally a lover of Truth; for he is the temple of God. The modern condition of life, the Godless culture of the present age and the materialistic nature of modern civilisation, with its constant stress on the rights of man rather than on his duties have induced a spirit of selfishness and misery of the toiling millions and the disregard of Truth which seems to darken the world. Even now, love of Truth and mutual trust characterise the major portion of the world's commerce. Credit and co-operation are founded on Truth. The world's commerce would come to a standstill if falsehood were to usurp the place of Truth. Truth still reigns supreme. The increase of the number of liars to-day is due to causes for which the whole mankind are responsible. Man is naturally a creature of circumstances. Character is the outcome of manifold forces internal as well as external. The story of George Washington and his axe is too well-known to need reflection here. What was it that prompted his fearless admission to his angry father? His father was angry indeed. But Washington

was the darling son of his father. He was assured of his father's love under any circumstances. In short, he did not fear his father. *This* was the secret of his bold admission. *Fear is one of the causes of falsehood.* It is the selfishness of the rich that makes slaves of the poor. But the world is so constituted that power, wealth, rank, and influence should always remain with the few and could never come to the many; so that the many will always be under the domination of the few. If the few use their gifts so as to further the interest of all, they will prove worthy of their gifts and men will be happy and God will be well pleased. If on the contrary they abuse their power and oppress the many, the latter will open their eyes and assert their strength. "Repression is the seed of Revolution." Hence the liar is rather to be pitied than condemned. The tyrant is no less responsible for the crimes committed by the slave than the slave himself. The guilt of every offence committed by the citizen falls more heavily upon the state than upon the offender. The truth of this proposition can best be understood only by those who realise themselves as part and parcel of the whole universe. It is founded upon the spiritual principle of the unity of universal life.



The whole humanity must rise or fall together. Even if there be a single sinner, he will hinder the progress of humanity. Hence the salvation of humanity will be postponed till the whole mankind realise their unity and work in amity for common good and salvation. It is only then that men will begin to love each other, and help each other. It is only then that cruel punishment will give place to loving persuasion and Truth will again sit enthroned, where falsehood is now supreme. Falsehood is the inevitable result of oppression and terror. Truth follows the manifestation of love and affection. Whatever emanates from love and charity is towards God and Truth. Whatever proceeds from hatred and ill-will, and hinders the advancement of humanity is falsehood. These propositions need further elucidation; and they will help us to solve aright some intricate ethical problems which remain unsolved to this day in the West.

Truth is a means and not an end. Human progress is the end. Spiritual redemption is our Goal. Truth is necessary for social order. If all men were false, social life would come to an end. But truth is not a device invented by man for the maintenance of social order. Man

is naturally truthful. Truth is the law of human nature. It is the very principle of his being. It needs no effort to speak truth. Falsehood is revolting to human nature. Man must cease to be himself before he can utter a lie. Truth is natural, falsehood unnatural. Truth is one, falsehood many. Truth is absolute; Falsehood relative. Truth is positive and Falsehood negative, falsehood is but the negation of truth. What is, is Truth. What is not, is falsehood. Truth has only to be expressed; but falsehood has to be invented. Man, when free, speaks Truth. He utters falsehood under a compulsion. Truth is the outflow of freedom and love. Falsehood emanates from oppression and hate. Truth is the parent as well as the product of the kingdom of Love. Truth promotes love and love promotes Truth.

Love is the highest law of human life. Perfection of Love is the only means to Perfection of life. Perfect life is the embodiment of love. Man begins with love and ends in love. The child first loves the mother and life is perfected when love expands to the full circle of the universe. It is the heart that moves the world. In the words of Herbert Spencer "The main springs of human activity are rather emo-

tional than rational." The heart commands and the intellect obeys. The heart determines and the intellect explains and executes. Hence love is the highest law of our being. What promotes love is Truth; what is not dictated by love is falsehood.

Life can be perfected only by obeying the laws of our being. These do not emanate from without. Their true source is within. "Know thyself" is the highest commandment of God. "Obey thyself" is the highest law of life. Man should follow the right and avoid the wrong, not from fear of external punishment, or of public condemnation, but because it is the law of his being and the way to his perfection. Man is on the right road when he delights in doing what is right and hates what is wrong, when love regulates his life and fear dares not enter his heart. External punishment, external praise, external reward, these do not affect life so powerfully as the pronouncement of the machinery of justice in the inmost recesses of our hearts. Man must first rise in his own estimation, before he is exalted above his fellowmen. To understand our nature, to know our destiny, to study the laws of our being, to obey them with delight and love, to be true



to ourselves, our neighbours, our country, humanity and God—this is the true road to perfection. This is the only path to self-realisation.

“Serene will be our days and bright,  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security.”

It was a faint glimpse of the glorious Vision of Perfect life that inspired this poetic effusion of Wordsworth.

When we turn from this ideal to the actual, what do we find? The world is in a chaotic condition to-day! Man is constantly confronted with a never-ending conflict of duties. His nature deceives him. Hence the importance of discrimination. Hence the imperative necessity for right choice. The accumulated iniquity of centuries attained intolerable magnitude and culminated in the Great War (The Mahabharata), which created a great crisis in the life of Arjuna, a crisis which paralyzed his reason by throwing him into a paroxysm of heart-rending agony and grief. A lesser than Sri Krishna could not have soothed his sorrow and reclaimed him from despair. Nothing but

the Divine Song could have breathed life into his prostrate limbs.

But Arjuna is the typical soul. The great crisis of his life illustrates the moral problems that confront men in the work-a-day world. The imperfect condition of the state and the complex machinery of modern life very often place us in a very sad predicament, when the right choice will become a hopeless task and reasoning will make confusion worse confounded. It is not necessary for our present purpose, nor is it possible within the limits of this paper, to anticipate and elucidate every possible emergency.

We are now concerned only with the question of Truth. Are we to adhere to Truth at all hazards? Is Truth the highest Dharma? Truth is our duty; but love is the end. Ahimsa is the highest Dharma. Truth is the handmaid of Ahimsa. Truth is the highest Dharma, so long as it does not conflict with Ahimsa. Lying is a sin because it is violence in speech. Ahimsa in thought, word and intent is the highest and noblest law of our being. Ahimsa is the comprehensive principle of ethical life. Love is the primary end. Any principle which conflicts

with Ahimsa is unethical. A firm grasp of that principle will save man from many a pitfall.

It is often said that the end justifies the means. But this principle should not be misunderstood. Nothing can justify a selfish end. Anything justifies the end which is based on Ahimsa. If by telling a lie you can do good to another, by harming none, then such a lie is no lie. It is Truth in the highest sense. Truth is not valued for its own sake. It should not be forgotten that truth is only a means to Ahimsa. Truth which causes Himsa or harm to humanity is not truth at all. It is the blackest lie.

But such a crisis rarely arises in life. Truth ought to be the general rule of life; for very rarely does it conflict with love. But sometime or other a crisis may arise. An innocent man is pursued by a band of dacoits. He comes and seeks shelter under your roof. The dacoits come and question you about his whereabouts. What is your duty in such a crisis? Are you to speak the Truth and deliver up the helpless fugitive



into the hands of the ruffians? Or are you to utter a lie and deny your knowledge? There can be only one answer to this question. The answer is based on the general principle that Ahimsa is the highest law of our life and Truth is only a means to Ahimsa and not an end in itself.

This is an instance of lapse from the path of Truth. But it is perfectly justified because the end is not selfish.

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